

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Speaker Bledsoe has ceaselessly dedicated his time and efforts to serving his country and the people of Colorado as the Speaker of the House in the Colorado House of Representatives. I am honored to bring his hard work and commitment to the attention of this body of Congress and this nation today. Thank you for all your service, Carl, and I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

**FORMER U.S. CONGRESSMEN'S
MONITORING DELEGATION TO
UKRAINE JULY REPORT—EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 2004

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I am submitting the following article for the RECORD.

Significant irregularities and improprieties have been found in the on-going presidential campaign in Ukraine by an election monitoring delegation of former Members of Congress in the Kharkiv, Poltava, and Sumy oblasts.

Five former U.S. Congressmen—John Conlan (R-AZ), Arlen Erdahl (R-MN), Jack Hightower (D-TX), Gregory Laughlin (R-TX), Andrew Maguire (D-NJ), and Tom Sawyer (D-OH)—traveled to Ukraine on July 25–31, 2004 to monitor presidential election campaign activities in the region. The communities visited were: Kupiansk, Merefa, and Vovchansk in the Kharkiv oblast; Chutove, Dykanka and Karlivka in the Poltava oblast; and Lebedyn, Okhtyrka and Trostianets in the Sumy oblast. These former congressmen were registered by the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Ukraine and accorded all the rights and privileges provided to foreign observers by Ukraine's law on presidential elections.

Ukraine is a signatory of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and therefore welcomes international observers to help secure a free and fair election. The congressmen's election monitoring activities included meetings with representatives of the main political parties, Ukrainian government officials, Central Election Committee, and U.S. officials in Kyiv. In the regions, the congressmen met with local government officials, representatives of NGOs, political parties, the media, and citizens, who shared their views and experiences of the political process in their respective communities.

**KEY FINDINGS OF THE FIRST DELEGATION TO
THE KHARKIV, POLTAVA, AND SUMY OBLASTS**

Generally, in the communities visited, local officials were very cooperative and generously shared their time and opinions with the delegation. Local officials provided space for meetings and assisted in extending invitations to representatives of political parties, media, and NGOs to meet with the delegation. The delegation does note, however, that there were occasions when opposition parties were not informed of the meetings and, thus, were denied an opportunity to express their views and have their respective cases heard.

In conversations with participants in the meetings attended and in conversations with ordinary Ukrainian citizens, the delegation was appalled to find that an overwhelming number do not expect the outcome of the election to be fairly decided. Those that hold this view often reply that the outcome has

already been determined and that the vote count will support that determination. Independent polls verify that around 70 percent of the population believes this. That reinforces the view that every effort must be made by observers to ensure that the vote count is accurate and fair.

While the delegation cannot investigate the allegations made, it does note with deep concern the repeated allegations of the systematic use of the government's administrative resources to bring pressure upon voters to support the candidate endorsed by government authorities. These reports are too numerous, consistent, and from too many different locations to be set aside; in fact they appear to the delegation to constitute a pattern of officially sanctioned political activity by government employees that is in violation of Ukraine's law on presidential elections.

The delegation is very concerned about these reports and appeals to the Ukrainian government to ensure that all local government officials strictly adhere to the law. Allegations include: threats regarding loss of jobs predominate; police preventing buses and automobiles from traveling to opposition rallies; forcing government workers, teachers, and hospital workers to sign petitions for pro-government candidate, Viktor Yanukovych; forcing regional councils to pass resolutions in support of Yanukovych; teachers and agricultural workers given quotas to collect signatures for Yanukovych, under threat to lose vacation time or jobs; students pressured to distribute Yanukovych literature; even patients have been threatened with discharge from hospitals and denial of medical services if they fail to sign and pledge to vote for Yanukovych.

In every community the delegation visited, they were greeted with hope and anticipation of a brighter tomorrow. They welcomed contact with the wider world and were anxious to host foreign visitors to show off their country and its potential. They deserve an opportunity to go to the polls and freely express their views and to be secure in the knowledge that all their votes are counted accurately in accordance with the law of Ukraine.

The delegation is a fact-finding mission and will report its findings to Ukraine's Central Election Commission, the U.S. Government, European governments, international organizations and the public through release to the mass media. The delegation does not support any candidate or political party and is only interested in helping ensure that the presidential election is free and fair.

Programming is organized by the U.S.–Ukraine Foundation (USUF), in partnership with the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress (USAFMC) and is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Foundation's second delegation traveled in August to the Cherkasy, Kyiv, and Kirovohrad oblasts and also included parliamentarians from Spain and the Netherlands. The third delegation, comprised of congressmen and a former member of the German Bundestag, traveled to the Kherson region during the week of September 19–25, 2004 to observe election campaign activities in the Kherson, Mykolayiv, and Zaporizhzhya oblasts.

**PAYING TRIBUTE TO MICHELLE
LAWRENCE**

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 2004

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Michelle Lawrence and thank her for her exceptional contributions to her community and the State of Colorado as a Jefferson County Commissioner. A two term commissioner, Michelle is a dedicated public servant and leader in her community, and I am honored to recognize her accomplishments before this body of Congress and this Nation today.

Michelle is a Colorado native who has lived most of her life in Jefferson County. She is the co-owner of a Jefferson county business that had been in her family for over 48 years. Michelle served in the Colorado legislature from 1990 to 1994, and is a former member of the board of directors of the Arvada Chamber of Commerce. She has been active in several local community organizations such as the Arvada Historical Society and the Arvada center for the Arts & Humanities and as a member of the Jeffco Transportation Task Force.

After leaving the General Assembly, Michelle continued her exemplary public service record by serving as a Jefferson County commissioner. Currently she is the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners and the Law Enforcement Authority Board. She also represents the county on the Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments and the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District Board. Michelle has been appointed as an alternate to the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Jefferson Economic Council, and most recently the Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Michelle Lawrence has ceaselessly dedicated her time and efforts to serving her country and the people of Colorado as a Commissioner for Jefferson County. I am honored to bring her hard work and commitment to the attention of this body of Congress and this nation today. Thank you for all your service, Michelle, and I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

**HONORING THE BROOKSVILLE
EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM
(BERT)**

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 23, 2004

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the members of the Brooksville Emergency Response Team, also known as BERT.

In the wake of Hurricane Charley's devastating visit to Florida, these remarkable individuals answered the call of duty. On the morning of August 14, 2004 at 6:45 a.m. these BERT operatives sprung into action and began to rebuild areas of the Fifth Congressional District left in shambles. Because of their efforts, the communities of Poinciana, Calooso, Lake Village, Lake Wales, Bascon,